Project: 0073-962-F01, PE-101

FUTURE 73 NEWS

Volume 4, Number 1

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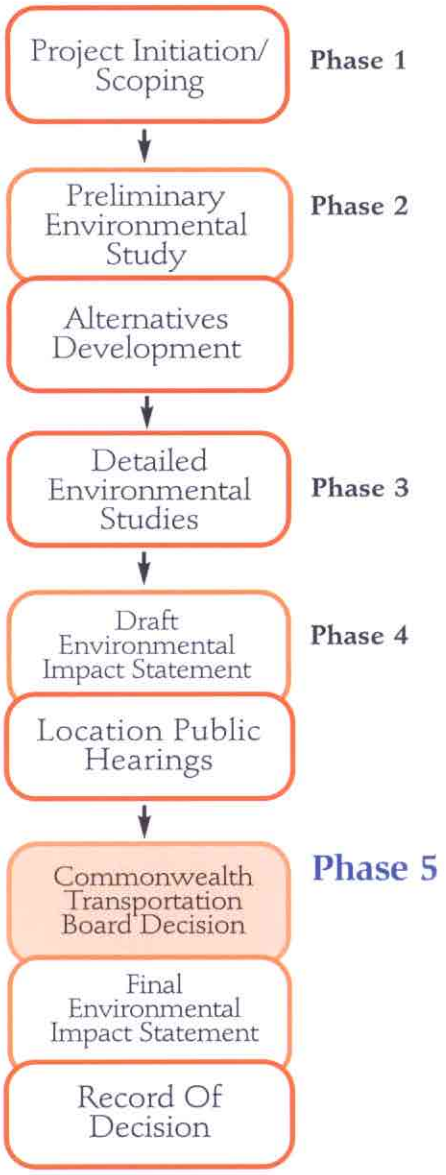
A newsletter designed to inform, assist, and engage the public.

Steps to Success: Where are We?



Following the CTB's decision, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be finalized with specific information about the selected corridor and an evaluation of all reasonable alternatives considered. The Final EIS (FEIS) also will discuss substantive comments received on the draft EIS and responses, summarize public involvement, and describe mitigation measures that are to be incorporated into the proposed action. The FEIS will then be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for consideration and approval. The FEIS will be reviewed for legal sufficiency prior to FHWA approval. Completing the FEIS and obtaining an approval by FHWA is expected to take about one year. Once FHWA approves the FEIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) is rendered by FHWA. The ROD will present the basis for the decision and it will summarize any mitigation measures that will be incorporated in the project thereby clearing the path for final design, right of way acquisition and construction activities.

Commonwealth Transportation Board Votes to Build I-73

In a landmark decision for Virginia, the 17 citizen members of the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) voted last week to build Interstate 73 from Roanoke to North Carolina. This section of I-73 would be part of a new north-south link between Michigan and South Carolina.

The Board selected a location that overlaps I-581 in Roanoke to Elm Avenue, then veers to the southeast and enters Franklin County near Coopers Cove, travels east of Rocky Mount into Henry County and stays east of Martinsville, before turning slightly and entering North Carolina southwest of Ridgeway. The Board also elected to build a connector road from existing Route 220 near Route 668 (Yellow Mountain Road) east of Buck Mountain in Roanoke County to the I-73 corridor near Route 657 (Crowell Gap) west of Kennett in Franklin County.

The decision to build I-73 follows nearly four years of intensive environmental study and an unprecedented public participation program undertaken by VDOT. Choices weighed by the Transportation Board included not building the road at all, making lower cost "spot" improvements to Route 220 south of Roanoke, and/or building a new interstate.

In making the decision, Board members factored in public opinion; preferences of local and elected officials representing counties, cities and towns in the 70-mile-long study area; environmental impact; effects to existing homes and businesses; and current safety conditions on Route 220.

They also looked at the purpose and need for the I-73 Location Study, which included improving system linkage and intermodal connections; improving corridor safety, mobility and capacity; and enhancing economic opportunities for attracting new industry and tourism. CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Public Participation

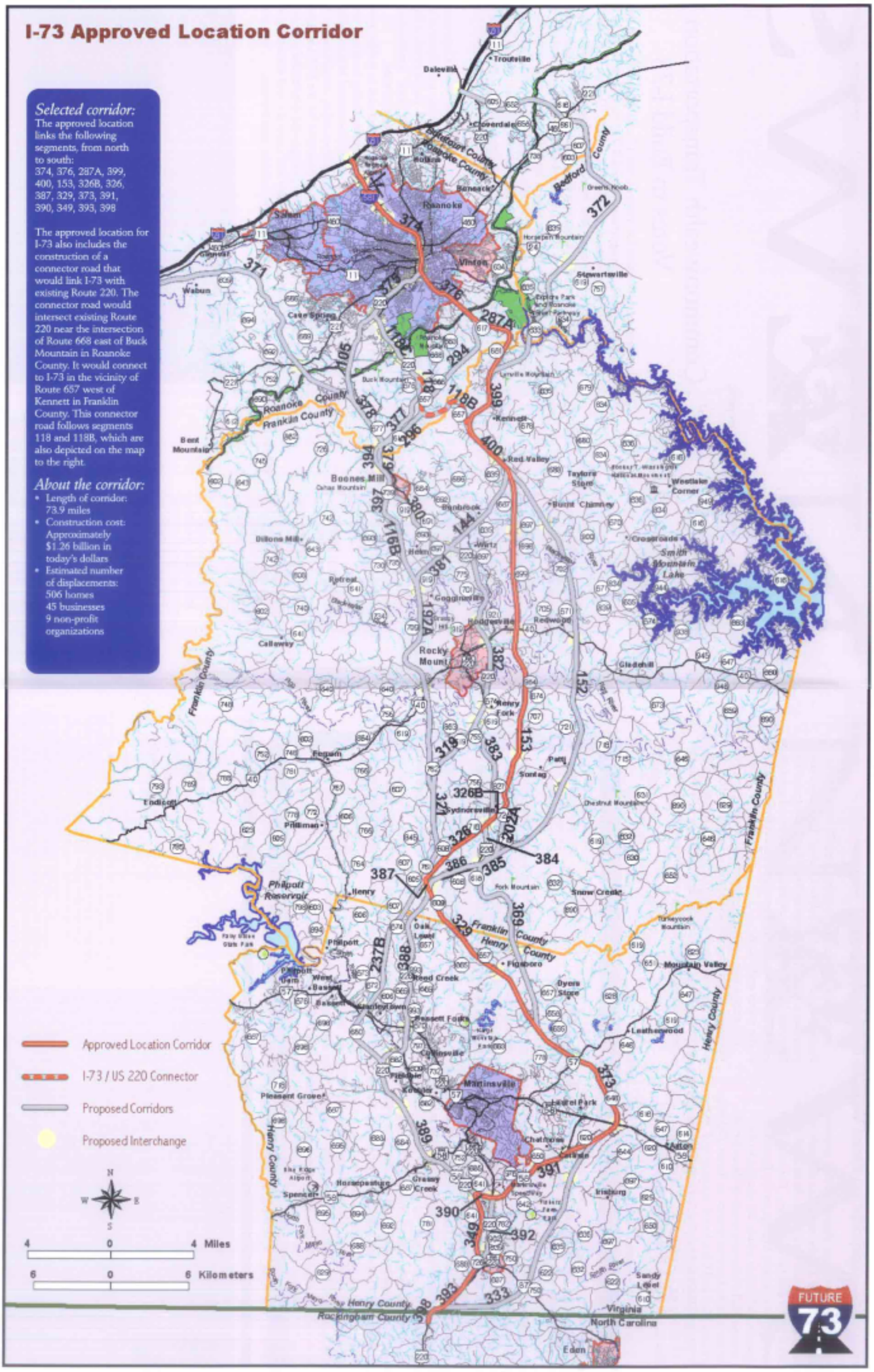
- More than 2,330 citizens attended the I-73 Location Public Hearings held in December 2000
- 8,669 citizens made comments and suggestions on the DEIS and the study
- When asked which alternative best fulfilled the need of the study – no build, spot improvements to Route 220, or new road:
  3,292 citizens answered new road
  2,839 opted for spot improvements
  2,991 said no build
- In response to a question asking citizens to cite benefits and concerns about the I-73 Location Study:
  1,432 people commented on economic benefit
  1,185 said safety was a concern on existing Route 220
  754 were concerned about traffic
  309 mentioned a need for transit

I-73 Approved Location Corridor

Selected corridor:
The approved location links the following segments, from north to south:
374, 376, 287A, 399, 400, 153, 326B, 326, 387, 329, 373, 391, 390, 349, 393, 398

The approved location for I-73 also includes the construction of a connector road that would link I-73 with existing Route 220. The connector road would intersect existing Route 220 near the intersection of Route 668 east of Buck Mountain in Roanoke County. It would connect to I-73 in the vicinity of Route 657 west of Kennett in Franklin County. This connector road follows segments 118 and 118B, which are also depicted on the map to the right.

About the corridor:
- Length of corridor: 73.9 miles
- Construction cost: Approximately $1.26 billion in today's dollars
- Estimated number of displacements:
  506 homes
  45 businesses
  9 non-profit organizations



Commonwealth Transportation Board Votes to Build I-73 *(continued)*

Board members adopted an alignment that improves safety on existing Route 220 by removing through traffic, such as trucks and doublewide trailers, from local traffic, such as school buses and farm vehicles. The route also provides stronger intermodal linkage to the Roanoke Regional Airport and points south. By veering to the southeast around Mill Mountain south of Roanoke, the chosen corridor avoids a severe impact to Route 220 near the Tanglewood Mall and Clearbrook areas as well as to Route 419/Starkey Road in Roanoke County. The selected path for I-73 allows for a crossing of the Blue Ridge Parkway that is acceptable to the National Park Service.

South of Roanoke, the location for I-73 runs east of Rocky Mount through Franklin County. This alignment provides a direct link between Franklin County and the Roanoke Valley, supports existing and planned growth east of Rocky Mount, and provides access from Route 40 to the north and south.

I-73 enters Henry County east of Oak Level, passes to the west of Figsboro, continues to the east of Laurel Park, turns to the southwest south of Carlisle, passes to the south of the Martinsville Speedway, and continues to the south where it enters North Carolina southwest of Ridgeway.

What Happens Next?

- Following the recent CTB action, VDOT engineers will look again at the selected corridor and finalize the EIS or FEIS. Updated information about the corridor will be included in the FEIS. The FEIS is forwarded to the FHWA for approval. Before approving the document, FHWA will conduct a legal sufficiency review. FEIS approval is estimated to occur in about 12 months.
- After approval of the FEIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) is prepared by FHWA. The ROD will explain the reasons for the project decision, summarize any mitigation measures that will be incorporated in the project and document any required Section 4(f) approval. The ROD will explain the basis for the project decision based on the information contained in the FEIS.
- If FHWA issues a ROD, Virginia can begin planning the construction of I-73, pending the availability of funds. No decisions have been made about when and where construction could begin.
- Environmental evaluation and early planning has not started for any other section of I-73 in Virginia.

For additional information about the approved location for I-73, please call VDOT's Salem District Office at (540) 387-5353. E-mail can be addressed to saleminfo@vdot.state.va.us. A Web site is available at www.vdot.state.va.us.

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